

CHEVALIER

NOVEMBER 2022

NORTHERN
ITALY





NORTHERN ITALY

If one feature defines and unifies all of northern Italy, it is Europe's most famous mountain range: the Alps. Not only do these mountains stitch Italy together with France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia, but they also tower over seven of the eight regions that make up northern Italy, looming large in the lives of those who inhabit their valleys and foothills. In addition to fostering vibrant tourist economies by attracting skiers, climbers, hikers, and cyclists from around the world, they play a significant role in shaping the cultures, climates, geologies, and agricultures of the regions that surround them.

When it comes to wine, the Alps' influence is easily and immediately seen if you travel to such regions as Valle d'Aosta, Alto Adige, the Veneto, Piedmont, and even Liguria and Friuli. Imagine, for instance, the valleys of Valle d'Aosta and Alto Adige, nestled between mountain peaks, where miles and miles of steep hillside vines receive abundant sunshine, cleansing winds, and essential diurnal shifts that keep grapes healthy and refreshed.

Dramatic inclines and their beneficial features are not limited, though, to high-elevation Alpine valleys. In the foothills of the Veneto, for example,

Gregoletto cultivates distinctive varieties like Manzoni Bianco amid the hills of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene, which are so dazzling and well-suited to wine production that they have been recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. At the other end of northern Italy, the Fantino brothers produce world-class Barolo along the magnificent slopes around Monforte d'Alba, a hilltop village in Piedmont ("foot of the mountains"). The continental climate, long summer days, and extended growing season are perfectly suited to Nebbiolo, a late-ripening grape variety as exacting as Goldilocks, commonly harvested here in mid- to late October.

Finally, Punta Crena, along Italy's northwestern coast, and Vignai da Dulin, near the country's northeastern coast, enjoy the marriage of the Alps and the Mediterranean. At Punta Crena, many of the vines climb the steep coastal hills alongside olive and lemon trees and receive ample sunshine while benefiting from cool breezes blowing in from the sea. Vignai da Dulin, meanwhile, is also at a meeting point of the Julian Alps and Adriatic, receiving cold air currents from the mountains and milder conditions from the sea—a perfect combination for Dulin's Friulano grapes.

—TOM WOLF

2020 COLLI TREVIGIANI MANZONI BIANCO ♦ GREGOLETTO \$22



ONE OF THE MORE THRILLING aspects of Italy's countless grape varieties is that the best examples resist facile comparisons. Take this crisp, zesty white wine from the Veneto, for example, made from Manzoni Bianco, a variety bred by Luigi Manzoni in the 1920s to 1930s. After a few sips, I was ready to pronounce Grego-

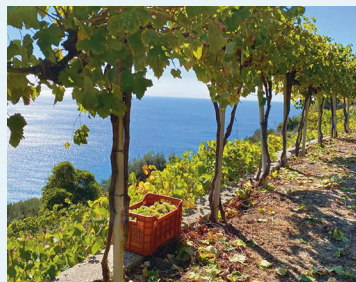
letto's Manzoni Bianco "Italy's Muscadet." Then I took another couple of sips and thought: Or is it Italy's answer to Chablis? Upon even further reflection, I wondered if this *bianco*, made in the gorgeous hills of Conegliano—a.k.a. Prosecco territory—was actually most similar to the driest examples of Alsatian Riesling or Pinot Blanc, given Manzoni Bianco's ancestry.

The truth is, it's somewhere in between and therefore imitates none of those, which is great news, because if you want Muscadet, Chablis, or a dry Alsatian white, buy those. Buy this Manzoni Bianco, meanwhile, to add a dose of stimulating diversity to your rotation of chiseled white wines that serve equally well as an aperitivo as they do alongside shellfish or a piece of grilled chicken. I poured a glass to go with an easy, but dangerously good dish of pasta with spinach and ricotta—courtesy of Marcella Hazan—and I could not have been more pleased.

2020 RIVIERA LIGURE DI PONENTE VERMENTINO "VIGNETO ISASCO"

♦ PUNTA CRENA \$30

THE ISASCO VINEYARD SITS on a plateau high up in the coastal mountains of Liguria, overlooking the small town of Varigotti and the expansive Mediterranean below. Thanks to the altitude, the vines benefit from cool nights that allow for slow ripening all the way until harvest in early October. The Vermentino grape thrives in this maritime setting. Sipping it evokes a fresh sea breeze, as if a current of air had picked up the Mediterranean's brine, swept away the delicate aroma of white wildflowers, and brought these elements to the grape. The result is crisp with local charm and true Ligurian character.



2020 FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA FRIULANO “LA DULINE”

◆ VIGNAI DA DULINE \$48



LORENZO MOCCHIUTTI STUDIED homeopathy, intent on becoming a holistic doctor. But when he inherited some neglected family vineyards in need of recovery, he instead adapted his knowledge of herbal medicine to winegrowing. His Friulano La Duline, a blend of the Tocai Giallo and Tocai Verde clones, is a prime example of what a caring regimen of herbal tisanes and other natural remedies can do for old, weathered vines. Hand-harvested and double-sorted fruit ferments in medium-sized oak vats, where it always finishes its malolactic fermentation—a lost tradition in the region. Generous on the palate and easy to love, La Duline delivers the magic of a healing touch.

2018 ALTO ADIGE PINOT NERO “FILARI DI MAZZON”

◆ FERRUCCIO CARLOTTO \$48

THIS VINEYARD HAS BEEN KNOWN for producing great Pinot Nero in Alto Adige since the mid-nineteenth century. Ferruccio’s daughter Michela and Peter Dipoli, a wine grower in nearby Egna, combined forces recently to write a book about this famous Italian terroir. Mazzon is a western-facing limestone shelf suspended above the valley near the town of Ora, where the Carlotto winery is located. From this striking site, Michela crafts an incredibly nuanced, delicate, ethereal Pinot Nero, which she ages in a combination of large and small oak casks. It offers the type of excitement with this grape that I can recall experiencing only in Burgundy. The book reveals the history behind the painstaking search for Italy’s best site for Pinot Nero that ended here, clinging to these Dolomite cliffs south of the Austrian border: Pinot Nero plucked from the heavens.



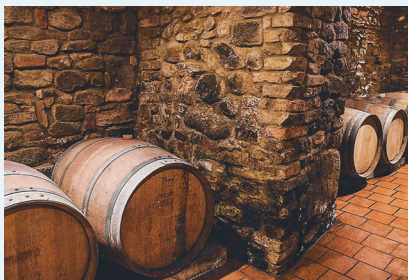
2020 VALLE D'AOSTA FUMIN ♦ CHÂTEAU FEUILLET \$42

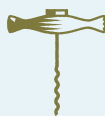
STARING AT THE LABEL on this bottle of Fumin, you'd hardly be to blame for wondering if it came from France or Italy! "Château Feuillet": French. "Denominazione di origine protetta": Italian. "Mis en bouteille par le producteur": French. "Maurizio Fiorano": Italian. What's going on here? Reflecting the linguistic overlap of the French-Swiss-Italian border, Château Feuillet is an Italian domaine with a French name. Nestled among the western Alps, fifty miles from where the three countries meet, this estate specializes in the region's indigenous grape varieties: Fumin, Cornalin, Petite Arvine, and so on. The primary grape in this bottling is Fumin, whose name derives from *fumo*, or "smoky." Some think it's called that because the wines bear a smoky taste. Ian D'Agata, in his *Native Wine Grapes of Italy*, instead proposes that the grapes look smoky when covered in a dusty, white coating called the "bloom." In any case, the grape was almost completely removed in the 1960s owing to the opinion of certain academics, who did not think it made noble enough wine. When you open this bottle, you might scream, "How could they?!" Luckily for us, a few producers saved the variety in Valle d'Aosta, and now we have supremely quaffable, distinct reds like this one. With 10% Syrah completing the blend, this *rosso* from Château Feuillet evokes dark fruit, has great acidity, and sports an irresistible texture, leaving you with a delicious, lingering finish.



2015 VINO ROSSO "LABORO DISOBEDIENT" ♦ A. & G. FANTINO \$66

FROM THEIR CELLAR in the heart of historic Monforte d'Alba, brothers Alessandro and Gian Natale Fantino exemplify low-intervention winemaking at its best, with an old-school vibe that resonates through each of their classic cuvées. The Laboro is a declassified Barolo Riserva aged in neutral old *botti*; Gian Natale defines it as "so classically Barolo that it's not even a Barolo." Deep and brawny, it is loaded with dark fruit and balsamic notes of incense, tea, and spice, finishing with a thick, chewy tannin. "This is old-fashioned Nebbiolo, the way we like it!" Gianni exclaims. This brooding beast epitomizes great Barolo from Monforte.





<p>2020 Colli Trevigiani Manzoni Bianco <i>Gregoletto</i> VENETO</p>	<p>Manzoni Bianco</p>	<p>25-year-old vines Sandstone, marl</p>	<p>Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional</p>	<p>Green apple, pear, citrus, flowers Invigorating, crisp, lean</p>	<p>Drink now</p>
<p>2020 Riviera Ligure di Ponente Vermentino “Vigneto Isasco” <i>Punta Crena</i> LIGURIA</p>	<p>Vermentino</p>	<p>16- to 31-year- old vines Red clay, gravel</p>	<p>Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional</p>	<p>Sea spray, wild herbs, lemon Sharp, balanced, medium-bodied</p>	<p>Drink now</p>
<p>2020 Friuli Venezia Giulia Friulano “La Duline” <i>Vignai da Duline</i> FRIULI</p>	<p>100% Tocai Friulano (40% Tocai Giallo, 60% Tocai Verde)</p>	<p>Vines planted in 1920 & 1936 Limestone, red clay</p>	<p>Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant recommended</p>	<p>Apricot, green almond, yellow peach Unctuous, bone- dry, stony</p>	<p>Drink now through 2028</p>
<p>2018 Alto Adige Pinot Nero “Filari di Mazzon” <i>Ferruccio Carlotto</i> ALTO ADIGE</p>	<p>Pinot Nero</p>	<p>Vines planted in 2000, 2010–2015 Sand, clay, chalk, limestone</p>	<p>Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant recommended</p>	<p>Black cherries, blood orange, tea Refined, youthful, plush, elegant</p>	<p>Drink now through 2030</p>
<p>2020 Valle d'Aosta Fumin <i>Château Feuillet</i> VALLE D'AOSTA</p>	<p>90% Fumin, 10% Syrah</p>	<p>10- to 12-year- old vines Sand, granite</p>	<p>Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional</p>	<p>Stones, wild berries, graphite, smoke Vibrant, juicy, aromatic</p>	<p>Drink now</p>
<p>2015 Vino Rosso “Laboro Disobedient” <i>A. & G. Fantino</i> PIEDMONT</p>	<p>Nebbiolo</p>	<p>70-year-old vines Sandy clay, marl</p>	<p>Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant recommended</p>	<p>Leather, truffles, spices, roses Powerful, luscious, hedonistic, layered, earthy</p>	<p>Drink now through 2035</p>

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